



MEETING REPORT

Thursday, March 21, 2002

Project Steering Committee Meeting No. 1 - Project Kick-Off

5:30 - 6:50 p.m.

Auditorium, West End Multi-Service Center (170 Heights Boulevard)

The meeting was opened at approximately 5:30 p.m. by Patricia Rincon-Kallman, Assistant Director of the City of Houston Planning & Development Department. Robert Fiederlein, Chief of Staff for District H Council Member Gabriel Vasquez, also offered opening remarks on behalf of the Council Member, who was out of town and unable to attend the kick-off meeting.

It was explained that Council Member Vasquez pushed for this study to the west of downtown since potential transit corridors in other directions are being studied, yet several of these corridors will ultimately depend on a transit connection somewhere through the District H "Inner Katy" area. The results of this study will feed into the other corridor studies and could have implications for potential improvements to be addressed by a METRO bond election in November 2003.

Meeting discussions and a brief presentation covered topics including:

- Introductions (Project Team and Steering Committee)
- Project purpose
- Project scope
- Project schedule
- Public involvement opportunities
- Roles and responsibilities of the Steering Committee

The PowerPoint presentation may be viewed on the City of Houston's project Web site, <http://www.ci.houston.tx.us/departme/planning/projects/katy/home.html>.

During the introductions, members of the Steering Committee were provided an opportunity to express the reasons for their interest in being involved with the project. Reasons cited included:

- Air quality
- Bicycle and pedestrian interests
- Transportation safety (between home and various destinations, slow down traffic, bicycle and pedestrian safety)
- Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) opportunities
- Enhancing the area's historic character
- Providing alternative transportation modes, options
- More walkable neighborhoods
- Improved mass transit, including rail as in other major cities (more reliable service to/from downtown and elsewhere)
- Multiple transportation options



Inner Katy Transit Oriented Development Study

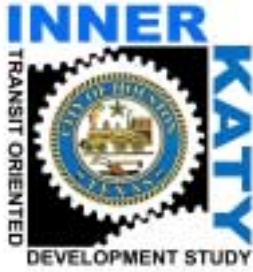
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- Low-income displacement concerns
- Yes on better transportation, but concerns about high-density population and neighborhoods facing “overdevelopment” (e.g., safety and development impacts in the Heights)
- Connections via transit (e.g., benefits to Spring Branch area to west, which is working on Long Point master plan)
- “Breathing room” for bayous (keep them in mind when considering development)
- Rails to Trails initiative through the Heights (several million dollars in non-City funds already committed)
- Quality of life
- Environmental enhancement
- Floodplain management/flood control (one of few areas that dodged major flooding last year, pace of development to west a major concern)
- Lack of green space
- Revived Washington Avenue corridor, as it was historically

During the presentation, Steering Committee members asked questions regarding the path of the two alternative alignments to be studied and the potential for other alignments to be considered (it was noted that the eastern portion of Alignment B should actually be on Washington Avenue versus several blocks to the north as initially mapped). They also asked for a definition of “high capacity transit.” Clarification was provided from WSA and a METRO general planning consultant (faster and more frequent service, longer service hours, two-directional service in same corridor). One Steering Committee member expressed the importance of dialog with the community in the study, as well as “powerful” dialogue that would actually have an effect on the selection and design of the alternative. WSA emphasized that the study team would work to balance data with the concerns of the people in the study area. Concerns were expressed about the impacts of a possible light rail line through the middle of the Heights as well as in other locations, such as the planned roundabout project at Washington and Westcott (already headed toward construction in Fiscal Year 2003).

The latter part of the Steering Committee meeting was opened for discussion and identification of key issues, trends, opportunities and constraints that Steering Committee members feel should be considered throughout the study process. Issues and interests identified during this discussion included:

- Blockage of bike lanes by parked cars, plus bus/bicycle conflicts
- Impact on the Washington and Westcott roundabout project (would be a concern even 25 years from now since roundabout intended as a gateway enhancement)
- Impact of alignments on individuals and their property, including historic resources along the corridors (other needs along narrow old railroad rights-of-way, such as Rails to Trails)
- Correlation with METRO Mobility 2025
- Coordination with reforestation and re-beautification projects currently underway along Heights
- Coordination with existing Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ) zones (TIRZ boards aware of the “pulse of development” in their areas)
- Clarification about the purpose of the project – economic development or transit?



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- Will high capacity transit actually serve local area or just go *through* area to serve more distant locations?
- Why going through industrial area – setting it up for developers?
- Need affordable housing, not high-rise development
- Benefits of high capacity transit for the residents of the study area
- Impact of high-density development – is it appropriate for established areas? (flooding and neighborhood impacts – West End already devastated by high-density development)

Mr. Fiederlein emphasized that possibilities for the Inner Katy alignment are a “blank slate” but must be studied since high capacity transit will traverse the area at some point in order to reach Bush Intercontinental Airport and other points to the north. Council Member Vasquez is interested in taking into consideration the values of and impacts to residents, neighborhoods and businesses in the corridors in developing an alternative for the corridor. It was also noted that this study will provide a “micro” look at the study area before METRO does more regional/“macro” studies of transit feasibility and alignment selection.

It was agreed that 6:00 p.m. would be a more convenient start time for future meetings, and the meeting location was fine. Steering Committee members will receive notebooks at the next meeting to keep track of the project materials. Committee members were also asked to help spread the word about the study within their various neighborhoods and organizations.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:50 p.m. Individuals wishing to submit additional comments were encouraged to sign in and provide their contact information. All Steering Committee members will be provided information about meeting outcomes and upcoming events and copies of study materials based upon this contact information.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact David Manuel, Project Manager, City of Houston Planning and Development Department at (713) 837-7807 or by e-mail at david.manuel@cityofhouston.net.